

## PFA Tips

## What is Medical Cannabis?

Medical Cannabis is becoming an increasingly more popular treatment with the legalization of its use in many states including Maryland. While cannabis is not being prescribed specifically for autism, the cannabinoids (including THC, CBC, CBD, CBG and CBN) are being used to treat symptoms commonly experienced by patients with autism.

### What is medical cannabis?

Medical cannabis uses the whole, unprocessed cannabis plant, or the chemicals found in the plant to treat symptoms of illness and other conditions. Cannabis strains are broken into two species: Sativa and Indica. Indica strains are more physically sedating. Sativa strains tend to have a more energizing effect.

### How does medical cannabis work on the body?\*

Every human body possesses a network of receptors and molecules called the endocannabinoid system or ECS. This network helps carry out the chemical and physical processes that maintain health—functions that range from regulating sleep and managing stress, to fighting pain and curbing appetite. If the body is unable to produce enough endocannabinoids or regulate them properly, the endocannabinoid system may break down, which can alter how our memory, pain management, immune system and other physiological processes function. The cannabis plant consists of numerous naturally occurring cannabinoids, which can step in to revive the ECS. The two main ones are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). THC is psychoactive (affecting the mind), and strains containing THC have been used for pain, nausea, sleep, and stress disorders. Strains that emphasize CBD may help alleviate pain, inflammation, and seizures associated with epilepsy.

### What are the cannabinoids found in cannabis plants and what effects do they have?\*

**THC:** Causes the euphoria associated with cannabis consumption.

**THCa:** The non-psychoactive chemical precursor to the THC. Best known for its anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective effects.

**THC<sub>y</sub>:** Suppresses appetite and is commonly associated with energizing effects.

**CBC:** A non-psychoactive compound with anti-anxiety effects shown to be more powerful than those of CBD.

**CBD:** A non-psychoactive compound being studied for a wide range of conditions, but best known for anti-seizure effects.

**CBG:** A minor cannabinoid most abundant in live cannabis and being studied for its neurogenic and antibacterial effects.

**CBN:** Sedating, slightly psychoactive compound being researched primarily as a treatment for insomnia.

### What are the available methods in which a patient may take medical cannabis?

How you consume cannabis will have different effects on the body. Inhaling (smoking flower or using a vaping device) will produce a quicker effect. Ingesting the product (sublingual drops, tablets or edibles) will take longer to experience the effects, although the effects will last longer. It may also be administered via a topical lotion, oil or cream.



### Are there possible adverse effects of medical cannabis?

At low doses, negative side effects could include fatigue and dry mouth. At higher doses, adverse effects could include psychoactive effects, dizziness, or paranoia.

### Are there research studies on medical cannabis?

The evidence about the efficacy of medical cannabis is largely anecdotal. However, in recent years there has been international research (Israeli study “Real life Experience of Medical Cannabis Treatment in Autism: Analysis of Safety and Efficacy”) as well as clinical studies currently underway in the US (University of California San Diego School of Medicine and Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia). These studies will gather information and assist medical professionals and patients in making the best choices about their treatment options.

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What is Medical Cannabis? – cont.

For what symptoms do different cannabinoids provide relief?\*

MOOD/BEHAVIOR							
	THC	THC <sub>a</sub>	THC <sub>v</sub>	CBC	CBD	CBG	CBN
ADD/ADHD	●				●		
ANOREXIA	●				●		
ANXIETY				●	●	●	
BIPOLAR	●				●	●	
DEPRESSION	●			●	●	●	
FATIGUE	●		●				
PTSD	●				●	●	
STRESS	●				●		

PAIN/SLEEP							
	THC	THC <sub>a</sub>	THC <sub>v</sub>	CBC	CBD	CBG	CBN
ARTHRITIS	●	●		●	●	●	●
CRAMPS	●				●		
FIBROMYALGIA	●				●		●
INFLAMMATION	●	●		●	●	●	●
INSOMNIA	●			●	●		●
MIGRAINE	●				●		
PAIN	●			●	●	●	●
PHANTOM LIMB	●				●		
SPINAL INJURY	●				●		

GASTRO-INTESTINAL							
	THC	THC <sub>a</sub>	THC <sub>v</sub>	CBC	CBD	CBG	CBN
APPETITE LOSS	●	●					
CACHEXIA	●				●		
CROHN'S	●	●			●		
GI DISORDER	●				●		
NAUSEA	●				●		

NEUROLOGICAL/NERVES							
	THC	THC <sub>a</sub>	THC <sub>v</sub>	CBC	CBD	CBG	CBN
ALZHEIMER'S	●	●		●	●	●	
EPILEPSY			●		●		●
PARKINSON'S	●	●		●	●	●	
M.S.	●	●			●		
SEIZURES			●		●		●
SPASTICITY	●	●			●		●
TOURETTE'S	●						

Pathfinders for Autism (PFA) does not endorse any specific treatments or therapies. Information provided is not meant to serve as medical advice. PFA urges individuals exploring any treatment to work with their treating physician to make the best decisions for their own care. Patients considering the use of medical cannabis need to be aware of Maryland's law and regulations. PFA supports the need for more scientific research on cannabinoids for autism related symptoms.

**Additional Resources**

Maryland Cannabis Administration - home page  
<https://mmcc.maryland.gov/Pages/home.aspx>

PFA Tips: Medical Cannabis Process for Applying in Maryland  
<https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/treatments-therapies/pfa-tips-medical-cannabis-process-for-applying-in-md/>

PFA Medical Cannabis Resources  
<https://pathfindersforautism.org/medical-cannabis-resources/>

\*Information provided by Curio Wellness, <https://curiowellness.com/>

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